

Commission on the Status of Black Males Minutes of January 10, 2005

Attendance: Members: William Knox, Jim Sims (Chair), Larry Brown, David Hummons, Cedric Harris.
Staff: Craig Brenner, Liaison, and Lee Bowlen, City of Bloomington Community and Family Resources Department

Guests: Aniko Bahr, MCCSC Office of Multicultural Education and Services; Guy Loftman, Monroe County Racial Justice Task Force; Ghangis Carter and Brian Bridges, Indiana University School of Education; Marsha Bradford, City of Bloomington Safe and Civil City Program.

Minutes of December 13, 2004 approved.

Follow up to Town Hall Meeting on Race, School Discipline and Criminal Justice on September 28, 2004

A. Monroe County Racial Justice Task Force Recommendations (RJTF)

The original report which led to the formation of the Monroe County RJTF was supported by the Unitarian Universalist Church and the NAACP. The study was conducted in 2000 and 2001. The RJTF study, completed in October of 2003, has been designated as a model study by the American Bar Association for how a community can come together to work on racial justice issues. Guy Loftman presented each of the summarized recommendations for the Commission to discuss (these recommendations are attached).

Guy reported that there are currently digital cameras in some squad cars with the intent to add more over a 2-3 year period. The significant barrier to full implementation is cost – which includes the cameras, personnel and data transfer.

David Hummons suggested developing a timeline and a deadline to guide the installation of more cameras. Jim Sims stated that when we talked to the Black male high school students, they said that they felt they were stopped by the police because they were teenagers and not because of their race. Guy Loftman wants to allow video footage to be viewed by the public. Jim proposed archiving for a period of time. David suggested looking at other municipalities for examples. Marsha Bradford commented that Carmel, Indiana has had success putting a camera in each car. They have used the videos to resolve disputes. In 2001, they had over 10,000 videos. Jim concluded with a reminder to follow up on the cost to add cameras to squad cars. Maybe we need to seek out a funding source.

One recommendation is that posting of bond not be required on first arrests. Blacks were held longer on misdemeanors.

Another recommendation is to initiate a sliding fee for Pre-Trial Diversion for misdemeanors. Whites use pre-trial diversion three times more than Blacks.

B. MCCSC Human Understanding and Diversity Forum

1. The date of January 20th for the first forum has been confirmed by Dr. John Maloy, MCCSC Superintendent.
2. Aniko Bahr presented a draft of the letter to be sent to invited members. Commission members suggested additions and clarifications to the draft.

3. Aniko suggested leaving this meeting as an open forum even though the first meeting will be used to set the mission and not to address concerns from the public, but their concerns will be received.
4. Jim stated he would like to see this be more community driven.
5. Aniko will send out the final draft to Commission members.

Tobacco Cessation Meetings William Knox will attend once a quarter. Jim will get him on their email list, etc.

State Commission The State Commission is without a director. Jim will contact Vernon Smith, State Representative from Gary, Indiana. He also expressed some concerns with the new Governor, Mitch Daniels. If the State Commission disbands, the Bloomington Commission would be okay as the Commission was created by a City of Bloomington ordinance.

Fall Planning Retreat Follow-Up Postpone until next meeting.

2005 Meeting schedule Genevieve Williamson and Paulette Dilworth cannot make the usual Monday meeting time.

Next Meeting is Wednesday, February 9, 2005 from 4:00 – 5:30 p.m. in the Hooker Conference Room #245, and then, tentatively, each 2nd Wednesday of the month.

Addendum: Racial Justice Task Force Recommendations received from Guy Loftman.

1. Seek a built in TV camera and recorder in each BPD and MCSD squad car set to automatically come on when flashing lights are turned on.
2. Adjust bond schedule to allow \$500 cash OR surety at initial release, not both. (Bond has already undergone major change since our initial study)
3. Make hearing date notice particularly obvious when people are in court. A separate, bright yellow colored paper with dates and times of mandatory appearances would be separately handed to the Defendant with express identification by court that those are the times to appear.
4. Seek backup notice address, phone and contact person for court and probation to minimize FTAs.
5. Don't require the defendant to appear personally at pretrial conferences.
6. Initiate a public education program on how the courts and criminal justice system work. Youth, especially should be informed of how to act if approached by police, if called to court or probation, and what to do if they believe they have been harassed or abused.
7. Initiate sliding fee for Pre-Trial Diversion Program.